



THE DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

Honorary Secretary's Report 2024-25

This report covers the 13-month period since the last AGM, which was held online on 23rd May 2024. During this past year the Field Club has continued with its programme of field outings; its botanical identification workshops on the first Saturday of each month; and it also continued with its series of monthly online presentations during the autumn and winter months.

A series of field excursions, led by Declan Doogue and David Nash, to record plant species for an updated Flora of Howth, concluded in September 2024; but a new series, to record for a supplement to the Flora of Co. Wicklow, has commenced this year. These are being organised by our President, Alexis FitzGerald. Other Field Club excursions visited a diverse range of habitats including: estate woodlands at Belmont Demesne, Co. Wicklow; a calcareous fen at Pollardstown, Co. Kildare; coastal vegetation at Booterstown, Malahide and Bull Island; lichens on the rocks at Turlough Hill and bryophytes at Ravensdale, Co Louth; a tree walk at St. Anne's Park and a visit to examine the conifers at the National Botanic Gardens; a visit to an extensively-managed farm in Co. Kildare; birdwatching at Bull Island and at Kilcoole; upland flora at Glendalough, Slieve Foy, the Wicklow Gap and Lough Ouler; geology at Glendalough, Loughshinny, and at the museum in Trinity College; and the traditional St. Stephen's Day walk along the South Bull Wall. Altogether a total of 26 outings were held during the year, with half of them in or around Dublin city, and the other half in the surrounding counties. I would like to thank all of the leaders, both from within the Field Club and from outside, who volunteered their time and expertise to lead these outings for the benefit of our members.

A great deal of thanks is due to our Honorary Vice President, Declan Doogue, for organising the series of Praeger Centre events on the first Saturday of each month. These workshops primarily focused on plant identification, including *Carex* and other members of the Cyperaceae, *Epilobium*, *Hypericum*, *Juncus*, *Aphanes*, *Brachypodium* and other grasses and the more difficult taxa such as *Rubus*, *Rosa* and *Taraxacum*. The workshops have also introduced participants to the floras of Bulgaria, East Asia and the Cooley Mountains; the bryophytes of Slieve Gullion; the importance of Witches' Brooms in conifers to the horticultural trade; the development of plant nomenclature and the importance of old maps for insights into habitats and rare species. A number of books were reviewed, including those dealing with the Irish landscape, the adventures of Alexander von Humboldt and the River Brosna.

The series of online talks, which ran from last September through until March this year, covered a wide range of topics, including: the orchids of Bull Island, the geology and fossils of Co. Wexford, semi-natural grasslands, the wonderful world of moths and the importance of nature's undertakers – the carrion beetles.

The DNFC WhatsApp Group, which now has 118 participants, has continued as a very useful information exchange medium throughout the year. It is an excellent platform for learning, and particularly useful to newer members who have just joined the Field Club and to those who are no longer able to join in our excursions and workshops. Many thanks to Tom Miniter for managing the group, and to all those who have posted materials during the year.

I would also like to thank Philip Grant for his stewardship of the Field Club's Facebook page, which posts information about the DNFC's activities and also highlights other relevant events in the environmental arena.

A special mention for our President, Alexis Fitzgerald, who has continued a long Field Club tradition of members publishing the results of their recording and research activities. Many congratulations to Alexis on the publication of the very comprehensive "*Flora of County Monaghan*"

Since the last AGM the DNFC Board has met on 5 occasions, with all of the meetings being held by teleconference using Zoom. The Field Club's Constitution was amended, following the decision to avail of an audit exemption, and the amended Constitution was submitted to the Charities Regulator for approval. The Board has also completed its compliance with the Charities Governance Code for the year ending in December 2024.

The Conservation Sub-committee has continued to work on its third position paper on the '*Biodiversity and Conservation of Hedgerows*'; while the Research and Publications Sub-committee were instrumental in planning the programme for the Praeger workshops and progressing various projects towards publication. The Fund Governance Sub-committee did not meet, as there was no disbursement from the special purpose funds.

A very successful joint outing with the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club to the North Antrim Coast, including a visit to Rathlin Island, was held in mid-June last year; and at the end of May this year we enjoyed a 1-day joint outing to the picturesque Castle Leslie Estate at Glaslough, Co. Monaghan.

Over the period since the last AGM, the Board has approved applications from 12 new members to join the Field Club, 3 of whom are Student Members; and at the end of calendar year 2024 we had a total of 178 members.

I would like to thank all of the presenters who contributed over the winter to our series of online seminars; all of the leaders who willingly led our outings to a wide range of interesting locations; and all of our members who actively participate in the WhatsApp Group, sharing their knowledge and expertise. Thank you.

Charles Shier
Hon. Secretary